

WILLIAM T. SHERMAN: EVOLUTION OF AN OPERATIONAL ARTIST

A Monograph

by

MAJ Steven E. Jackowski
United States Army



School of Advanced Military Studies
United States Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

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Name of Candidate: MAJ Steven E. Jackowski

Monograph Title: William T. Sherman: Evolution of an Operational Artist

Approved by:

_____, Monograph Director
Thomas A. Bruscino, Ph.D.

_____, Seminar Leader
James Barren, COL

_____, Director, School of Advanced Military Studies
Thomas C. Graves, COL

Accepted this 23rd day of May 2013 by:

_____, Director, Graduate Degree Programs
Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

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ABSTRACT

WILLIAM T. SHERMAN: EVOLUTION OF AN OPERATIONAL ARTIST, by MAJ Steven E. Jackowski, 57 pages.

This historical narrative describes the evolution of Major General William T. Sherman's conceptualization and implementation of operational art. Focused on the period between April 1861 and April 1865, this narrative views his operational approach through the lens of modern U.S. Army doctrine, specifically, operational art as defined by Unified Land Operations and Mission Command. This work delves into Sherman's education, experience and development as an operational artist under the tutelage of Major General Henry W. Halleck and Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant and then analyzes the application of that art in his later campaigns. The relevance of Sherman's evolution resonates in today's army. The idea that an officer can develop from a tactician to an operational artist through self and institutional education, senior mentorship and relevant combat and training experience exhibited a perfect example for the existence of the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS).

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INTRODUCTION

General of the Army William Tecumseh Sherman was an extraordinary, controversial and complex individual. His ascension into the pantheon of American great captains was neither preordained nor expected. Wading through an average military career following his graduation from West Point, Sherman resigned his commission and tried his hand in the business and education sectors prior to the breakout of the American Civil War. Returned to active service in 1861, Sherman slogged through the first year of the war and found himself relegated to a recruiting and training billet in St. Louis, Missouri. Grasping the rising star of General of the Army Ulysses S. Grant, Sherman saved himself and elevated his performance to that of greatness. Forever associated with the Battles of Shiloh, Corinth, Chattanooga, Meridian and Atlanta and the Georgia and Carolina Campaigns, Sherman propelled himself from tactical mediocrity to operational brilliance. How did Sherman overcome his lackluster beginnings and transform himself into an inspiring figurehead studied throughout the world for his military accomplishments? By analyzing Sherman's battles and campaigns from 1862-1865, this paper delves into his transformation by exploring his visualization and understanding of operational art through the lens of current United States Army doctrine.

Before diving into Sherman's civil war trials and tribulations, it is necessary to understand his frame of mind and reference. Sherman's upbringing and early years broadly influenced the rest of his life.¹ Bereft of his father at the age of nine and raised in the home of

¹Biographical sketch of Sherman's life prior to the American Civil War is based up on numerous works: John F. Marszalek, *Sherman: A Soldier's Passion for Order*, Paperback Edition (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007); Michael Fellman, *Citizen Sherman: A Life of William Tecumseh Sherman* (New York: Random House, 1995); Lloyd Lewis' *Sherman: Fighting Prophet* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932); Stanley P. Hirshson, *The White Tecumseh: A Biography of General William T. Sherman* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997); James Merrill's *William Tecumseh Sherman* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1971); and William Tecumseh Sherman, *Memoirs of General W.T. Sherman*, ed. Michael

Thomas Ewing Sr., an Ohio Senator, Sherman experienced a troubled childhood. The loss of his father coupled with his mother's inability to care for her children left Sherman feeling like an outsider in his foster family and in constant need of approval and reassurance. Letters to his brother John and foster sister Ellen reveal a confused soul desperate for belonging. These unresolved needs, acceptance and approval, played a critical role during his command progression in the American Civil War.

His remarkable military career began inauspiciously in 1836 when he arrived at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York. Appointed by his foster father, Senator Ewing, Sherman graduated sixth in a class of forty-two. His penchant for acquiring demerits overshadowed his academic excellence; thus dropping his final ranking by two positions, from fourth to sixth.² Assigned to the 3rd Artillery Regiment in Florida, Sherman witnessed the conclusion of the Second Seminole War without experiencing any combat actions. Over the next few years, various assignments within the regiment moved him across the southeastern United States. Stationed in Georgia, South Carolina and Alabama, Sherman frequently traveled and extensively studied the surrounding terrain, which later served him as he revisited the area as the commander of an invading Union army.

The outbreak of the Mexican-American War in 1846 provided Sherman with another chance for glory. Assigned to Company F, Sherman travelled for 198 days aboard the USS Lexington around Cape Hope, the southern tip of South America, and into Monterey Bay, California.³ While in transit, American forces completed the conquest of California, thus depriving Sherman of his second chance for gaining combat experience. He remained in

Fellman (New York: Penguin Books, 2000).

²Sherman, *Memoirs*, 13.

³Ibid., 36.

California for three years, serving as quartermaster, commissary and finally adjutant to the military governor. Although he did not gain any combat experience, Sherman gained extensive knowledge concerning logistic operations that proved extremely useful during the Civil War.

The 1850s started on a positive note for Sherman. He married Thomas Ewing's daughter, Ellen, and received a promotion to captain and assignment to the Commissary Department. The marriage to Ellen helped Sherman overcome the feelings of an outsider but it increased his reliance on Thomas Ewing for support during financially tough times. The close relationship between Ellen and her family was a constant burden for Sherman throughout his marriage and it would increasingly influence his decisions prior to the civil war. The political influence Thomas Ewing wielded proved essential for Sherman throughout his career in spite of his disdain for Ewing's assistance.

Over the next three years, Sherman worked in St. Louis, New Orleans and San Francisco overseeing the procurement and distribution of supplies for much of the army. However, the constant moving and his increasing financial debt from an inadequate salary took a toll on him and his family. Eventually buckling to the constant pressure of his wife and her family, and after receiving a sound business proposal in San Francisco, Sherman resigned his commission in September 1853 and entered the civilian workforce. The relationships Sherman made with men like Winfield Scott, Henry Halleck, Braxton Bragg, Don Carlos Buell, Robert Anderson and others continued to play an important role during his break in service and future army career.

Sherman spent the next four years working as a bank manager in San Francisco and New York, gaining a reputation as an efficient and honest businessman. Military matters remained a constant part of his life. In 1856, San Francisco experienced a mob uprising that threw the city into chaos. At the time, Sherman received a commission as a major general in command of the Second Division of Militia tasked with restoring peace to the city. Asking assistance from General John Wool, Commander of the Department of California, and Commodore David

Farragut, Commander of the navy yard on Mare Island, Sherman proposed using militia armed with federal weapons from Wool's arsenal and naval gun support to quell the rioting. All seemed in order until General Wool pulled his support for the operation as the mob overwhelmed the city. Sherman immediately resigned his commission for failing to complete his required task. He forever remembered and despised the anarchy brought about by the mob and inflamed by the press. Sherman contentiously battled the press throughout his career.

Between 1857 and 1859, Sherman left the financial sector, attempted and failed as a lawyer and finally settled his gaze on returning to the Army. Unable to find employment with the regular army, Sherman received an appointment as the Superintendent at the Louisiana Seminary of Learning and Military Academy in 1859, thanks to the assistance of Don Carlos Buell. This two-year period marked a high point for Sherman as his financial situation improved, his reliance on Thomas Ewing declined and he found contentment with his commission as a colonel in the Louisiana Militia. However, the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 threw his life into chaos as he refused to stay in Louisiana once that state seceded and joined the Confederacy in 1861. Sherman spent the few remaining months prior to reentering the war looking for work and resettling in St. Louis. He found work as the President of the Fifth Street Railroad, a local trolley service, and declined a position as the Assistant Secretary of War. Sherman desired command of a regular army regiment, which he received on 14 May 1861.⁴

Everything Sherman experienced prior to taking command of the Thirteenth Regular Infantry built a foundation for future growth. The political power wielded by Thomas Ewing and his brother John Sherman, an Ohio Republican Congressman, provided support he needed for initial placement in the Union Army. This political backing continued to provide assistance throughout the conflict. Sherman was extremely intelligent but prone to periods of deep

⁴Ibid., 160.

depression and anxiety from repeated failures. He floundered in the opening months of the war but found solace in leading soldiers in battle. His time spent in the South provided him with an understanding of the southern psyche that few of his comrades shared and few ever grasped. This insight directed the course of future operations. His dedication to the Union and preservation of law and order provided the moral compass that guided his actions and justified his actions throughout the war. However, as he reentered the army, he lacked combat experience, self-confidence and an understanding of operational campaigning. These attributes were developed and refined from the opening shots at Bull Run to the final surrender of General Joe Johnston's Army in 1865, culminating a meteoric rise from regiment to army group commander.

Concerning previous literature on Sherman, many biographies and military analytical works are available. John Marszalek penned *Sherman: A Soldier's Passion for Order* based on the premise that Sherman attempted to absolve the disorder in his life, caused by his father's early death, through the utilization of destructive warfare. This would end the Civil War sooner and prevent more unnecessary casualties thus restoring order to the Union and ending the chaos created by Southern secession.⁵ Stanley Hirshson wrote *The White Tecumseh: A Biography of General William T. Sherman* through the colored lens of Sherman's anxiety caused by his mother's family history of mental instability and its effects on his military career.⁶ In his book *Citizen Sherman*, Michael Fellman emphasized Sherman's turbulent emotional state in the context of social interactions and military activities.⁷ James Merrill redefined Sherman with his book, *William Tecumseh Sherman*, when he discovered previously unknown letters at Notre Dame. Merrill attempted to rectify the persona of the warmonger with that of the humanitarian

⁵Marszalek, *Sherman*, xiii.

⁶Hirshson, *The White Tecumseh*, ix-xi.

⁷Fellman, *Citizen Sherman*, ix-x.

discovered in the letters. Additionally, he analyzed how Sherman approached and solved complex problems from a nineteenth century perspective. In his introduction to B.H. Liddell Hart's book, *Sherman: Soldier, Realist, American*, author Jay Luvaas proposes the British theoretician used Sherman's campaigns to develop his strategy of the indirect approach.⁸ Yet for each of the groundbreaking books, none of them attempt to divine how Sherman understood the nuances of the battlefield.

This paper differs from previous works on Sherman as it delves in to his development as an operational artist. Viewing Sherman's battlefield performance through the lens of modern United States Army doctrine, this paper details his understanding of Union strategic goals and the tactical tasks necessary to accomplish them. This paper provides a greater understanding of how Sherman's upbringing and development prior to and his experiences during the war created a unique opportunity ripe for Sherman's growth into an exceptional operational artist. It continues by describing Sherman's tutelage under Ulysses S. Grant and his subsequent demonstration of operational mastery during the Atlanta, Georgia and Carolina campaigns.

⁸Basil Henry Liddell Hart, *Sherman: Soldier, Realist, American*, Introduction by Jay Luvaas (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1993), vii-ix.

FIRST BULL RUN TO SHILOH

All artists use the materials and time available to create a work of art. In the military, a work of art consists of achieving the desired outcomes with respect to time, place, and purpose. According to Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, operational art is defined as, “[T]he pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose.”⁹ Additionally, ADP 3-0 continues by delineating that operational art is not bound to a certain echelon of command but resides at the echelon that must, “effectively arrange multiple tactical actions in time, space and purpose, to achieve a strategic objective, in whole or in part.”¹⁰ ADP 3-0 also states:

Operational art is how commanders balance risk and opportunity to create and maintain the conditions necessary to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative and gain a position of relative advantage while linking tactical actions to reach a strategic objective. It requires commanders who understand their operational environment, the strategic objectives, and the capabilities of all elements of their force.¹¹

To put this into context at the start of the war, the Union Army was an amateur force comprised of short and long-term volunteers from different regions of the northern states, sprinkled with some regular soldiers. Most Americans viewed peace as the normal state of affairs, thus war was an anomaly, an interruption in of their normal routines and they were determined to get back to their normal lives as quickly as possible.¹² Spurred by the press, this created an environment in which an amateur force and agitated populace expected an immediate, victorious,

⁹Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Unified Land Operations*, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 10 October 2011), 9.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹*Ibid.*, 10.

¹²David Hackett Fischer, *Washington's Crossing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 370.

and decisive outcome in order to allow them to return to their daily lives. In addition to this quick victory, Americans expected it to occur with the least amount of cost in terms of casualties. To employ this force properly, commanders, like Sherman, needed to manage their own expectations and understand their force's capabilities. Unfortunately, Sherman, like most of the commanders, was inexperienced and professionally ill equipped to command at echelons above the company or regimental level. The first year of the war would be one of discovery learning.

Sherman's professional education was lacking as he prepared to command a brigade of four volunteer regiments in combat. As a student at West Point, Sherman studied under Dennis Hart Mahan. Mahan taught civil and military engineering in addition to military science. He wrote many treatises on military fortifications but his most important work was *An Elementary Treatise on Advanced-Guard, Out-Post, and Detachment Service of Troops with the Essential Principles of Strategy and Grand Tactics*. In this work, Mahan advocated many of the principles now commonly included as elements in operational art; basing, tempo, endstate, lines of operations and strategic (decisive) points. Additionally, he wrote about a Napoleonic-style, decisive offensive actions and campaign planning, maintaining the initiative and some of the concepts presently associated with Mission Command; mutual understanding at all levels, use of broad general orders, and providing clear commander's guidance.¹³ Finally, Mahan recognized the importance of an army's organization, especially the corps system employed by Napoleon and copied by other European countries. As Robert Epstein identifies in his book, *Napoleon's Last Victory*, the corps system provided resiliency that allowed defeated forces to fight another day, as corps were hard to destroy in a single engagement.¹⁴ Thus, the corps system inherently negated

¹³ Dennis Hart Mahan, *An Elementary Treatise on Advanced-Guard, Out-Post, and Detachment Service of Troops with the Essential Principles of Strategy and Grand Tactics*, 2nd ed. (New York: John Wiley, 1863), 169-195.

¹⁴ Robert M. Epstein, *Napoleon's Last Victory* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas,

the capacity for a decisive victory, such as Austerlitz, and required a way to overcome the stalemate created by two like organized forces.¹⁵

While serving as a brigade commander during the skirmish at Blackburn's Ford, 19 July 1861 and the Battle of Bull Run, 21 July 1861, Sherman's first experiences in combat displayed his personal bravery and resolution but also his inexperience commanding large troop formations and disdain for Volunteer units. In a letter to his wife Ellen dated 19 July 1861 following the Blackburn Ford engagement, Sherman wrote, "I am uneasy at the fact that the Volunteers do pretty much as they please...I will acquit myself as well as I can—with Regulars I would have no doubts, but these Volunteers are subject to Stampedes."¹⁶ Following the Union defeat at Bull Run, Sherman wrote Ellen with regards to the Volunteer's performance, "The difficulty is with the masses—our men are not good Soldiers—they brag, but don't perform—complain sadly if they don't get everything they want—and a march of a few miles uses them up."¹⁷ Sherman's misgivings and mistrust of Volunteer forces ignored the past century of American military experience. Sherman was still coming to grips with the nature and capabilities of his forces and the ways in which to employ them correctly.

During the battle, Sherman assumed risk with the tactical employment of his four regiments when he saw an opportunity to seize high ground on the Confederate flank through an undefended ford. He attacked the Confederate position without knowledge of their position, employing the regiments in a piece-meal fashion unsupported by artillery, as it could not cross the

1994), 5.

¹⁵Ibid., 6.

¹⁶Colonel William T. Sherman to Mrs. Ellen Ewing Sherman, 19 July 1861, in Brooks D. Simpson and Jean V. Berlin, *Sherman's Civil War: Selected Correspondence of William T. Sherman, 1860-1865* (Chapel Hill: the University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 118-119.

¹⁷Colonel William T. Sherman to Mrs. Ellen Ewing Sherman, 24 July 1861, Ibid., 125.

ford. This created the conditions for his regiments' repulsion by an inferior Confederate force behind covered positions. Sherman's inability to maneuver these forces together in time and space precluded him from seizing key terrain and the initiative from the enemy. Sherman failed to apply Mahan's teachings, but his subsequent battles and campaigns witnessed his growth as a commander and artist through self-education and practical experience. This initial experience spurred Sherman to begin his professional education through self-development. He wrote, "I organized a system of drills, embracing the evolutions of the line, all of which was new to me, and I had to learn the tactics from books; but I was convinced that we had a long, hard war before us, and made up my mind to begin at the very beginning to prepare for it."¹⁸

In September 1861, Confederate forces violated Kentucky's neutrality and seized the vital city of Columbus along the Mississippi River. This move created an opportunity for Union forces to secure key Kentucky cities while garnering the support of undecided Kentuckians. Union forces immediately occupied Louisville and Paducah, along the Ohio River, and established the Department of the Cumberland, commanded by Brigadier General Robert Anderson, under whom Sherman had previously served as a lieutenant.

At this time, Sherman was a newly promoted brigadier general of volunteers and assigned as Anderson's second-in-command. As he explained to Ellen, "I think Anderson wanted me because he knows I seek not personal fame or Glory, and that I will heartily second his plans and leave him the Fame."¹⁹ Sherman accepted this job after interviewing with President Abraham Lincoln and gaining assurances that he would, "...serve in a subordinate capacity, and in no event

¹⁸Sherman, *Memoirs*, 177.

¹⁹Brigadier General William T. Sherman to John Sherman, 19 August 1861, in Simpson and Berlin, *Sherman's Civil War*, 135.

to be left in a superior command.”²⁰ For Sherman believed, based on his observations and participation in the Battle of Bull Run that volunteer forces were not capable of organized and effective military maneuvers and their setbacks resulted in the sacking of commanding officers. He would not command, “Not till I see daylight ahead do I want to lead—but when danger threatens and other slink away I am and will be at my post.”²¹ Sherman desired a command but on his terms and after the culling of the military inept he observed in command positions. The loss at Bull Run and the Union’s subsequent retreat shook Sherman’s confidence to his core and unfortunately, for him, command came quicker than expected and ultimately resulted in another setback.

Assuming command of the Department of the Cumberland on 8 October 1861, Sherman assessed the situation, accounted for the forces allocated to him and reported deficiencies where he observed them. In brief, Sherman’s force of approximately 18,000 men occupied a front line of almost 300 miles in the center of the Union strategic battlespace, between Major General John C. Fremont’s Department of the Missouri and Major General George B. McClellan’s Army of the Potomac.²² Confederate General Albert Sidney Johnston and approximately 35,000 men and possibly 20,000 Kentuckian sympathizers opposed him. Confederate forces centered on Columbus and Bowling Green, KY and prepared for the systematic conquest of the remainder of the state with a supporting road network that converged on Louisville. While discussing these issues with Secretary of War Simon Cameron and his party in Louisville, KY on 17 October 1861, Sherman detailed his current situation, defined the requirements for the defense of

²⁰Sherman, *Memoirs*, pg. 178.

²¹Brigadier General William T. Sherman to John Sherman, 19 August 1861, in Simpson and Berlin, *Sherman’s Civil War*, 135.

²²Sherman, *Memoirs*, 186.

Kentucky at 60,000 soldiers, and then listed his estimate of the Union soldiers required for the conquest of the Mississippi Valley to the Gulf of Mexico at 200,000.²³ This unexpected and unimaginable estimate created quite a debate as Secretary Cameron promised to send aid upon his return to Washington D.C. Yet, one of Cameron's party was Mr. Samuel Wilkeson, a journalist from the New York Tribune, who published Sherman's discussion with Secretary Cameron.²⁴ Sherman considered this an act of espionage as the enemy learned of his troop disbursements and capabilities through friendly reporters. This reinforced his already distrustful relationship with the media, harkening back to his days in San Francisco during the period of mob rule. Sherman's interaction with the media was contentious and continued to deteriorate through the remainder of the war.

Unable to come to a common understanding with his superiors concerning the situation in Kentucky, Sherman requested and received permission to step down as the Department of the Cumberland's commander. Reassigned to St. Louis to work under Major General Henry Halleck, his former shipmate to California and the current commander of the Department of the Missouri, Sherman served as training detachment commander at Benton Barracks near St. Louis. In this position, he trained the units sent to commanders throughout the department and continued to improve his tactical aptitude with consideration for unit capabilities but nothing could restore the confidence necessary to lead. As Sherman wrote to his brother John, now a senator, on 9 January 1862, "I prefer to follow not lead, as I confess I do not have the confidence of a Leader in this war, and would be happy to slide into obscurity."²⁵

²³Ibid.

²⁴The War for the Union, "Secretary Cameron's Visit to Kentucky and Indiana," *New York Tribune*, 30 October 1861. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030213/1861-10-30/ed-1/seq-6.pdf> (Accessed 23 OCT 2012).

²⁵Brigadier General William T. Sherman to Mrs. Ellen Ewing Sherman, 11 January 1862,

While commanding the instructional detachment, Sherman also received mentoring from Halleck concerning operational planning. During the winter of 1861, Halleck conferred with Sherman regarding the upcoming campaign beginning in February 1862.²⁶ Halleck planned to employ Brigadier General Ulysses S. Grant's forces from the District of West Tennessee to attack Forts Henry and Donaldson along the Tennessee River. These forts lay in the center of the Confederate defense line spanning from Bowling Green to Columbus, Kentucky. Halleck believed he could turn the defenses at Columbus and make Bowling Green untenable by securing Nashville, Tennessee, which he named as his objective point in a letter to Major General George B. McClellan on 20 January 1862.²⁷ In addition, Halleck planned to secure Missouri as a Union base of operations by driving the remaining Confederate forces into Arkansas. The campaign Halleck visualized was complex and required deft handling of all forces as he concentrated enough forces under Grant to achieve his objective but retained enough resources to conduct diversionary attacks in other parts of his department. Sherman remembered these concepts of penetration, concentration, and diversion in the future while planning his own campaigns.

Following the victories along the Tennessee River, Sherman took command of the fifth Division in Grant's renamed Army of the Tennessee and fought at the Battle of Shiloh in April 1862. The battle reinvigorated Sherman's lagging self-confidence and bonded him to Grant. For Sherman, the return to tactical command under a commander like Grant was fortuitous. Grant was the mentor Sherman needed to continue his growth as a leader, tactician, and operational artist.

in Simpson and Berlin, *Sherman's Civil War*, 184.

²⁶ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 203.

²⁷ Brigadier General William T. Sherman to Major General George B. McClellan. United States Government, *The War of Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901) Series I, Vol. 8, 508-511. All further references to the Official Records (OR) are from Series I, unless specifically noted.

Where Halleck was methodical, intellectual, and terrain focused, Grant was decisive, adaptive, persistent, and enemy focused. Sherman observed these men, learned from them and synthesized their attributes into something uniquely his own.

CORINTH TO MERIDIAN

Sherman's education and development continued in terms of both the tactical employment of troops and the operational art of arranging those troops in time, space and purpose to achieve a strategic objective, in this case the Mississippi River. The potential for a series of victories over the Confederates presented itself following the Battle of Shiloh. Union forces possessed overwhelming numerical superiority and an established logistics base at Shiloh from which to operate. The only thing missing was a dynamic leader capable of recognizing and harnessing the opportunity by applying the necessary impetus to coordinate the Union forces in time, space and purpose. Unfortunately, Halleck was not that leader.

Prior to Shiloh, Halleck convinced President Lincoln and Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton to enlarge his Department and grant him control of the Department of Ohio, commanded by Major General Don Carlos Buell.²⁸ This proved fortuitous as Buell's army in conjunction with Grant's army defeated the Confederates on the second day at Shiloh. Halleck moved from St. Louis to command his concentrated force, which also included Major General John Pope's Army of the Mississippi, in person but he lacked an understanding of how war had changed since the opening days at Bull Run. This lack of understanding and inability to adapt to new ideas of warfare, embodied by men like Grant and Sherman, created a divide between the commander and his subordinates.

Halleck amassed the fighting potential of his department in an army numbering approximately 100,000 soldiers, yet he did not capitalize on his advantage and destroy the remaining Confederate forces in the area.²⁹ Halleck being a product of his times, believed in

²⁸John F. Marszalek, *Commander of All Lincoln's Armies: A Life of General Henry W. Halleck* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 119-120.

²⁹Sherman, *Memoirs*, 235.

overwhelming his opponents through sheer weight of numbers rather than speed and movement.³⁰ This led to the development of an overly cautious and deliberate plan to move against Corinth, allowing Beauregard's forces to prepare extensive entrenchments around the city. The movement to Corinth, about twenty miles from Shiloh, took approximately a month and allowed the Confederate forces to escape. Halleck's objective was Corinth not Beauregard's forces.³¹ Following Corinth, Halleck dispersed his forces, going against everything he espoused in his book, and lost an opportunity to complete the plan he proposed prior to Shiloh.³² Union forces failed to retain the initiative as they assumed a defensive posture in the western theater. In a letter to his wife Ellen, Sherman wrote, "The war this Fall and winter will be very bloody, and the South will get the advantage. They now have the advantage in numbers & position. They are concentrated and we are scattered."³³ Although Sherman admired Halleck for putting this fighting force together, he considered this lost opportunity and dispersion of forces a "fatal mistake" and remembered these mistakes later when planning his own campaigns.³⁴

During the intervening months between the occupation of Corinth and the beginning of the Vicksburg campaign, Sherman conducted multiple operations that had far-reaching effects on future operations. His unit provided security while rebuilding the railroad between Memphis and Corinth, he served as the military governor of Memphis, and he continually drilled and trained his

³⁰Marszalek, *Commander*, 123. Marszalek points out that Halleck was a hybrid between Jomini and Mahan and his book *Elements of Military Art and Science* detailed his tactical beliefs that he implemented in the Corinthian campaign. 42-46.

³¹*Ibid.*, 125.

³²*Ibid.*, 120. Halleck proposed to move against Corinth and Vicksburg following the fall of Nashville to Union forces, and open the Mississippi River Valley.

³³Major General William T. Sherman to Mrs. Ellen Ewing Sherman 31 July 1862, in Simpson and Berlin, *Sherman's Civil War*, 260.

³⁴Sherman, *Memoirs*, 235-7.

units as new regiments arrived. Initially assigned to repair and guard the railroad between Corinth and Memphis, Sherman experienced the unpredictability and frustration of southern cavalry raids. These raids consisting of a relatively small number of fast moving equestrians, struck at multiple points along this approximately one hundred mile railroad line disrupting resupply operations.³⁵ Security concerns for this line of communication forced Sherman to disperse his forces in an attempt to protect the whole line, but he lamented, “[T]heir cavalry was saucy and active, superior to ours, and I despaired of ever protecting a railroad, presenting a broad front of one hundred miles, from their dashes.”³⁶ Southern cavalry continued to be a bane for Grant and Sherman throughout the Vicksburg campaign, but Sherman learned from his enemy and would repay them in kind during his Meridian, Georgia, and Carolina campaigns.

A change in the chain of command during the summer of 1862, altered operations in the western theater, and began a series of events ultimately ending the conflict. Lincoln named Halleck general in chief and brought him to Washington D.C. This elevated Grant to commander of the Department of Missouri and provided him the opportunity to plan and execute aggressive offensive operations with the endstate of seizing Vicksburg and reopening the Mississippi River for northern use. Sherman became the commander of the District of West Tennessee and military governor of Memphis. It was during his time in Memphis that his view of the war changed and with it his approach to carrying out future operations.

While in Memphis, Sherman constantly dealt with guerillas firing on resupply vessels traveling down the Mississippi River. In a letter to Halleck concerning an incident with guerillas, Sherman stated, “I am satisfied we have no other remedy for this ambush firing than to hold the

³⁵Ibid., 238.

³⁶Ibid.

neighborhood fully responsible, thought the punishment may fall on the wrong parties.”³⁷ As Mark Grimsley pointed out in his book, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865*, Sherman pursued a policy quite in keeping with that of other Union commanders from Missouri to Virginia – and, for that matter, many Confederate commanders as well.”³⁸

To dissuade local civilians from harboring guerillas, Sherman retaliated against the town of Randolph, Tennessee, following an attack by guerrillas against the supply ship Eugene. He sent a force to raze the town “leaving one house and such others that might be excepted in case of extraordinary forbearance on part of owner.”³⁹ Concerning the destruction of Randolph, Sherman reported to Grant, “Punishment must be speedy, sure and exemplary... I would not do wanton mischief or destruction, but so exposed are our frail boats, that we must protect them by all the terrors by which we can surround such acts of vandalism... The town was of no importance, but the example should be followed up on all similar occasions.”⁴⁰ The need to bring the war home to the southern people was forefront in Sherman’s mind and it stayed there for the remainder of the war. A proponent of “hard war” not “total war,” he advocated the destruction of vital military industry and infrastructure, not the rape and pillage of civilians and public property. Sherman’s

³⁷OR, Vol. 17, Part I, 23. Major General William T. Sherman to Major General Henry Halleck, 14 July 1862. This letter is also quoted in Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865* (Cambridge: The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1995), 115. In Grimsley’s use of the quotation, he mistakenly ends the sentence with the word “places” rather than “parties” assumingly in reference to the Randolph incident.

³⁸Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, 115.

³⁹William T. Sherman to Major John A. Rawlins, 26 September 1862, in Simpson and Berlin, *Sherman’s Civil War*, 306-07.

⁴⁰Ibid.

understanding of southern psyche, reinforced since his time living among them, was apparent throughout his writings while serving in Memphis. He wrote Thomas Ewing Sr:

As to changing the opinions of the People of the South that is impossible and they must be killed or dispossessed. We have finished the first page of this war in vainly seeking a union sentiment in the South, and our Politicians have substantially committed suicide by mistaking the Extent and power of the Southern People & its Government, and are about Entering on a Second period. Those who sought political advantage by a display of military Zeal have disappeared from the Field of action, and now will begin the real struggle of conquest.⁴¹

Sherman continued his development as an operational artist under Grant as he had under Halleck. Whereas Halleck had provided book knowledge and logistics training to Sherman, Grant tutored Sherman on the art of leadership, command and intuitive decision-making. The Vicksburg campaign highlighted all of Grant's appreciable traits and Sherman readily watched and learned. In November 1862, Grant consolidated his freshly reinforced units for an offensive campaign meant to open the Mississippi River to northern navigation. To do this, he needed to secure Vicksburg and then continue south to link-up with Major General Nathaniel Banks moving north from New Orleans.

Grant intended Sherman to play a major role in the upcoming campaign and consulted with him during the planning session conducted on 7 December 1862.⁴² The final decision was an attempt to defeat Confederate forces led by Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton through an enveloping attack. This attack entailed Sherman moving down the Mississippi River with approximately 40,000 soldiers utilizing the gunboat fleet of Admiral David Porter. He would land north of Vicksburg, where the Yazoo River intersected with the high ground at Hayne's Bluff, and position himself behind Pemberton while Grant attacked south from Oxford to keep

⁴¹William T. Sherman to Thomas Ewing Sr., 10 August 1862, *Ibid.*, 263-4.

⁴²Sherman, *Memoirs*, 261.

Pemberton's attention.⁴³ This was Sherman's first independent command since his time in Kentucky. Rather than insecure, uncertain, and inexperienced Sherman was now self-confident, determined, and implacable.

The coordination of this simultaneous action between Grant and Sherman ended when Sherman departed Memphis on 19 December as his troops embarked upon Porter's gunboat fleet.⁴⁴ He no longer had access to telegraph communications and during the next ten days, this proved critical. On 20 December 1862, southern cavalry forces numbering approximately 1,500 and commanded by Major General Earl Van Dorn, conducted a raid along Grant's line of communication at his supply depot, located in Holly Springs.⁴⁵ This raid destroyed critical supplies for Grant's forces but also cut the telegraph line; preventing Grant from communicating with Sherman or anyone else in the north for more than a week.⁴⁶ Unbeknownst to Sherman, the envelopment envisioned by him and Grant was no longer feasible. Grant was not fixing Pemberton's troops and he was about to attack a reinforced and prepared defensive position.⁴⁷

Before continuing with Sherman's attack in the Chickasaw Bayou, a discussion must occur about the true significance of the Holly Spring raid. Although it proved a hindrance in the short-term, Grant's adaptability and profound revelation concerning his army's sustainment

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid., 265.

⁴⁵Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 1999 Modern Library Paperback Edition, Reprint (New York: Charles Webster & Company, 1885), 229.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷OR, Vol. 17, Part I, 604. Sherman acknowledges receipt of a rumor concerning the Holly Spring Raid on 21 December 1862, as he is collecting the remainder of his forces, Brigadier General Frederick Steele's division, at Friar's Point, Arkansas. He writes to Grant, "I hardly know what faith to put in such a report, but suppose whatever may be the case you will attend to it." At this point, Sherman considered the opportunity of seizing the bluffs against the risk of doing it alone, and determined to continue with the mission.

altered the course of not only this campaign but also Sherman's future campaigns. As Grant wrote:

After sending cavalry to drive Van Dorn away, my next order of business was to dispatch all the wagons we had, under proper escort, to collect and bring in all supplies of forage and food from a region fifteen miles east and west of the road from our front back to Grand Junction, leaving two month's supplies for the families of those whose stores were taken. I was amazed at the quantity of supplies the country afforded. It showed that we could have subsisted off the country for two months instead of two weeks without going beyond the limits designated. This taught me a lesson which was taken advantage of later in the campaign when our army lived twenty days with the issue of only five days' rations by the commissary. Our loss of supplies was great at Holly Springs, but it was more than compensated for by those taken from the country and by the lesson taught.⁴⁸

In addition to Grant's misfortune, a combination of terrain and weather, proficient Confederate defenders and poor Union coordination defeated Sherman's attack against the Confederate position along Chickasaw Bayou south of Hayne's Bluff. As Sherman described his point of debarkation:

[it] was in fact an island, separated from the high bluff...by a broad and shallow bayou...On our right was another wide bayou, known as Old River; and on the left still another, much narrower, but too deep to be forded, known as Chickasaw Bayou. All the island was densely wooded except for Johnston's plantation...and a series of old cotton-fields along Chickasaw Bayou. There was a road...but it crossed numerous bayous and deep swamps by bridges, which had been destroyed; and this road debouched on level ground at the foot of the Vicksburg bluff opposite strong forts, well prepared and defended by heavy artillery.⁴⁹

In addition to the restricted terrain, rain and fog caused havoc with the movement and coordination for the assault. During a personal reconnaissance, Sherman identified only two points along his front at which his forces could cross the bayou between him and defenders with about a mile in between the points.⁵⁰ Through these two points, Sherman attempted to maneuver

⁴⁸Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 230-1.

⁴⁹Report from Major General William T. Sherman to Colonel John A. Rawlins, 3 January 1863, OR, Vol. 17, Part I, 606-11, also in Sherman, *Memoirs*, 269.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

three divisions while using the fourth as feint north of Chickasaw Bayou in the direction of Hayne's Bluff. The Confederate forces were inferior in numbers but under the skillful command of Brigadier General Stephen D. Lee, they utilized the terrain and interior lines to block each of Sherman's attempts at seizing the bluffs.

The force Sherman commanded was an ad-hoc organization consisting of four divisions, only one of which Sherman actually commanded as part of his recently designated XV Corps and unfortunately, the commander of that division was wounded on the first day of battle.⁵¹ Sherman conducted more detailed planning and analysis to create a common understanding of the situation because he lacked the time to build an effective and trusting command team. Although he issued a detailed order and map enroute to their point of debarkation, the situation on the ground created enough confusion as to negate the original plan.⁵² Throughout the three-day battle, southern reinforcements, no longer preoccupied by Grant's forces, were able to solidify the Confederate line, stifle Sherman's momentum and force him to depart in defeat. Grant and Sherman's first attempt to coordinate actions in time, space and purpose over great distances failed, but the lessons learned by both men formed the foundation for subsequent successful campaigns.

Immediately following the setback at Chickasaw Bayou, Sherman and Major General John McClernand conducted a joint operation with Admiral Porter to seize the Confederate position at Arkansas Post, also referred to as Fort Hindman.⁵³ Situated along the Arkansas River,

⁵¹General Orders, War Department Adjutant General's Office No. 210 to Major General Grant, 18 December 1862, OR Vol. 17, Part II, 432. Sherman's unit designation changed from Fifth Division, XIII Corps, when Grant's XIII Corps was renamed the Army of Tennessee. This new Army consisted of four corps; McClernand's XIII Corps, Sherman's XV Corps, Hurlbut's XVI Corps and McPherson's XVII Corps.

⁵²Major General William T. Sherman to his division commanders aboard the ship *Forest Queen*, 23 December 1862, OR 17, Part I, 616-18, also in Sherman, *Memoirs*, 266-268.

⁵³Sherman, *Memoirs*, 274. Even though both Sherman and McClernand were corps commanders, McClernand outranked Sherman and assumed command of both corps, while

a tributary of the Mississippi River, the confederates at Arkansas Post posed a threat to the Union lines of communication along the Mississippi River. The confederates recently captured a Union supply ship, the Blue Wing, and Sherman intended to retrieve the ship and eliminate the confederate position.⁵⁴ This mission also afforded Sherman the opportunity to redeem himself and raise the morale of his troops in light of their recent setback at Chickasaw Bayou.

The attack on Arkansas Post proved successful. After traveling on Porter's gunboats to their debarkation point a few miles below the fort, the Union troops conducted a tactical turning movement to compel the Confederates to leave their initial defensive positions and retreat into the fort. Sherman, in coordination with McClelland's forces and Porter's gunboats attacked and overwhelmed the Confederate position through fire and maneuver forcing their capitulation.⁵⁵ During this three-week operation, Sherman successfully redeemed himself and raised the morale of his troops while seamlessly coordinating and fighting alongside Porter's river fleet. Sherman continued to gain experience and understanding at the tactical level while conducting joint operations that would soon provide the basis for his future operations.

After destroying the confederate position along the Arkansas River, Sherman rejoined Grant as he earnestly began operations to destroy the confederate forces at Vicksburg. Over the next four months, Grant conducted multiple, small-scale operations to, "[S]ecure a footing upon dry ground on the east side of the river from which troops could operate against Vicksburg...to divert the attention of the enemy, of my troops and of the public generally."⁵⁶ These operations

turning his corps over to Brigadier General George A. Morgan, recently a division commander under Sherman during the Chickasaw Bayou expedition.

⁵⁴Ibid., 274-75.

⁵⁵Ibid., 277-79.

⁵⁶Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 234-36.

continued to fixate Pemberton's attention on the river-bluff interface north of Vicksburg allowing Grant to deceive him and attain a position of relative advantage south of Vicksburg. In addition to operations conducted by his soldiers, Grant in conjunction with Porter conceived an idea to bypass Vicksburg's gun emplacements and get gunboats and transports south of Vicksburg. Grant's use of deception operations to force a response from Pemberton impressed Sherman and he retained that knowledge for future reference.

With gunboats south of Vicksburg, Grant retained the initiative and capitalized on Pemberton's fixation north of Vicksburg. Grant ordered Sherman to conduct a feint at Hayne's Bluff to maintain Pemberton's attention while he crossed the Mississippi River and made an unopposed landing at Bruinsburg with the XIII and XVII corps. As Grant wrote in his memoirs:

When this was effected I felt a degree of relief scarcely ever equaled since. Vicksburg was not yet taken it is true, nor were its defenders demoralized by any of our previous moves. I was now in the enemy's country, with a vast river and the stronghold of Vicksburg between me and my base of supplies. But I was on dry ground on the same side of the river with the enemy. All the previous campaigns, labors, hardships and exposures from the month of December to this time previous that had been made and endured, were for the accomplishment of this one objective.⁵⁷

Grant accomplished the inconceivable and continued to baffle Pemberton with his choice of operations and objectives. He added to Pemberton's confusion by simultaneously approving multiple raids throughout his Department of Tennessee. Colonel Benjamin Grierson led approximately 1,700 cavalymen on a three-week raid starting at La Grange, Mississippi on 17 April 1863 and ending at Baton Rouge, Louisiana on 2 May.⁵⁸ During this raid, Grierson dispatched a second element from his own to add to the confusion and destruction. Grant stated,

⁵⁷Ibid., 255-56.

⁵⁸Ibid., 260.

“This raid was of great importance, for Grierson had attracted the attention of the enemy from the main movement against Vicksburg.”⁵⁹

Recalling Sherman from his maneuvers north of Vicksburg, Grant maneuvered his three corps northeast toward Jackson, Mississippi, rather than directly north at Vicksburg. This compelled him to alter his resupply operations. Rather than continually maintain his line of communication, Grant chose to consolidate his fighting strength and conduct sporadic resupply missions by wagon trains protected by designated units from his supply base at Grand Gulf. The lessons from the Holly Springs raid also came into play as Grant ordered his units to live off the land and secure the use of draft animals and vehicles from the local population.⁶⁰ This further added to Pemberton’s uncertainty as he repeatedly attempted to find and cut Grant’s line of communication, which were nonexistent, while Grant inexorably marched to Jackson and cut the final Confederate line of communication and supply.

Ultimately, Grant outmaneuvered and outgeneraled Pemberton and forced the surrender of Vicksburg and all the forces contained within. On 3 July 1863, the day prior to the official surrender of Vicksburg, Grant tasked Sherman to ready his forces to attack Confederate General Joseph Johnston, commander of the Confederate Department of the West.⁶¹ Sherman’s attack against Johnston was the final chapter of the Vicksburg Campaign and one of the most important as it changed the manner in which Union forces dealt with southern civilians and their property. Sherman marched his Expeditionary Army of three corps, toward Jackson, Mississippi and besieged Johnston and the city but failed to contain Johnston and he slipped away with his army

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid., 259.

⁶¹Major General Ulysses S. Grant to Major General William T. Sherman, 3 July 1863, OR, Vol. 24, Part III, 462.

during the night of 16 July 1863.⁶² The next day Union forces reoccupied Jackson and set about the deliberate destruction of the city. This differed from the previous occupation in May 1863, when Sherman's corps destroyed only military industrial buildings.⁶³ As Mark Grimsley notes, "What happened around Jackson during mid-1863 was unmistakably different from what had gone before. It was a clear attempt to destroy the region's economic value to the Confederacy, without significant other factors at work. And it was done with a thoroughness unusual, if not altogether unprecedented."⁶⁴

This campaign exemplified such a level of operational art that it became the ideal for the remainder of the war. The use of multiple deception operations to confuse the enemy, requiring forces to live off the land and move as light and as fast as possible, using tactical and operational maneuver to seize, retain and exploit the initiative and finally the exploitation and subsequent pursuit of retreating enemy. All of these lessons Sherman absorbed, pondered and incorporated into his own operational approach. Sherman made one more addition to his operational approach following the occupation of Jackson, Mississippi, the demoralization of the civilian populace through the controlled destruction of everything in his path.

The surrender of Vicksburg and the subsequent surrender of Port Hudson secured the Mississippi River for the Union. The achievement of the western strategic objective created new issues for its commander and soldiers. Tasked to govern the newly acquired regions, Grant and the Army of the Tennessee faced the same problems following their victory at Corinth; dispersion

⁶²Sherman, *Memoirs*, 304-05. The three corps were IX Corps, XIII Corps and XV Corps. Sherman invested the city from the north, west and south with the northern and southern flanks reaching the Pearl River which protects the eastern side of Jackson. It was over this river that Johnston escaped during the night of 16 July 1863.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 297.

⁶⁴Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, 159.

of forces, line of communication security and requirements to support other theaters of operations. The two final tasks brought Grant to the forefront of Union commanders as he went to Chattanooga to stabilize the situation. In order to do that, Grant called upon Sherman and his XV Corps once again.

The Union defeat at the Battle of Chickamauga Creek in September 1863, created the Chattanooga crisis Grant and Sherman now faced. Initially tasked by Halleck to support the Army of the Cumberland under Major General William S. Rosecrans, Sherman and his corps marched for Chattanooga. Remembering Grant's use of the Mississippi to supply the Vicksburg campaign, Sherman utilized the Tennessee River to support his logistical and transportation needs.⁶⁵ This allowed Sherman to march his corps roughly six hundred miles, from Vicksburg to Bridgeport, Alabama, in just over six weeks.⁶⁶ While masking his true strength from the enemy, Grant moved Sherman's forces to his left, northeastern, flank and conducted a night crossing of the Tennessee River to surprise and attack confederate forces along Missionary Ridge as part of the larger battle of Chattanooga which ended in a Union victory. Sherman's participation during this battle was more remarkable for his movement prior to the actual battle and the application of previous lessons learned than the tactical employment of forces on the battlefield. It exemplified Sherman's development and maturity as an operational artist and provided a full-dress rehearsal for his next large-scale maneuver aimed at the vital transportation hub of Meridian, Mississippi.

⁶⁵Major General William T. Sherman to Major General Ulysses S. Grant, 10 October 1863, OR Vol. 30, Part IV, 236. Grant became commander of all Union western forces, encompassing the Army of the Ohio, commanded by Major General Ambrose Burnside, the Army of the Cumberland under Rosecrans, and the Army of Tennessee on 16 October 1863. He immediately named Sherman the Army of Tennessee commander and replaced Rosecrans with Major General George H. Thomas. Sherman, *Memoirs*, 326 also see Major General Henry Halleck to Major General Ulysses S. Grant, 16 October 1863, OR Vol. 30, Part IV, 404.

⁶⁶Marszalek, *Sherman*, 241.

On 21 December 1863, Sherman met with Grant in Nashville to discuss the winter campaign season.⁶⁷ It was during this meeting that Grant approved the Meridian expedition. The purpose of this expedition was to defeat confederate forces in Mississippi and free up many of the Union troops garrisoning the Mississippi River by expanding the Union presence along the eastern bank. Additionally, this operation aimed to destroy much of Mississippi's railroad infrastructure and the cavalry force under Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest that constantly plagued Union supply operations.⁶⁸

By conducting a raid into Mississippi, Sherman demonstrated his adaptability and innovation as a commander. This mission, planned in coordination with Grant, conducted in his Department of the Tennessee, executed by his soldiers and personally led by Sherman proved ultimately successful with only one minor mishap. Sherman gathered about twenty thousand men from Hurlbut in Memphis and McPherson in Vicksburg in addition to seven thousand cavalrymen under Brigadier General W. Sooy Smith.⁶⁹ Sherman ordered Smith to move from Memphis to Meridian, starting no later than 1 February 1864, and destroy Forrest's cavalry force.⁷⁰

As part of his planning preparations, Sherman employed spies throughout the south to gather information and give out misinformation to the enemy. During this raid, his spy network accurately reported the composition and position of the confederate forces led by Confederate Lieutenant General Leonidas Polk. While gathering information, Sherman's spies also gave the impression that he was going to attack Mobile, Alabama. This forced Polk to disperse his forces and made it impossible for him to gather enough men to face Sherman once he moved toward

⁶⁷Sherman, *Memoirs*, 357.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 357-59.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 360.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

Meridian.⁷¹ Sherman's force moved the one hundred and fifty miles from Vicksburg to Meridian in eleven days, arriving at his destination on 14 February 1864.⁷² Staying in Meridian for five days, Union forces destroyed the local military industry, storage capabilities and transportation network.

Unfortunately, General Smith never rendezvoused with Sherman's forces as Forrest defeated him and forced him to return to Memphis with his mission incomplete. Besides Smith's failure, the Meridian campaign accomplished almost all its objectives. The misinformation campaign deceived Polk and put him out of position to defend against Sherman; the destruction of the transportation network prevented Confederate forces from massing in Mississippi and it ultimately allowed Sherman to allocate an additional twenty thousand men for his upcoming campaign in Georgia.⁷³

Over the previous nineteen months, Sherman continually altered and refined his operational approach under Grant. Augmented by Grant's intuitive and dogged-pursuit of the operational objective, the methodical and logical foundation provided by Halleck transformed into something uniquely suited for Sherman's leadership style. This combination proved unstoppable over the remainder of the war.

⁷¹Ibid., 363. In a letter to General Nathan Banks, Sherman outlines his plan to raid Meridian while using a follow-on attack against Mobile to deceive Polk.

⁷²Ibid., 362.

⁷³Ibid., 364.

THE ATLANTA CAMPAIGN

On 18 March 1864, Sherman replaced Grant as commander of the Military District of the Mississippi. His command encompassed: the Departments of the Ohio, commanded by Major General Schofield; Cumberland, commanded by Major General Thomas; Tennessee, commanded by Major General McPherson and Arkansas, commanded by Major General Steele.⁷⁴ Newly promoted Lieutenant General Grant, now commanded all the armies of the United States and relocated to Washington D.C. This change in the command structure of Union forces finally put a single individual in charge of the war making capabilities of the north and allowed Sherman to operate under a leader he trusted and admired. The bond forged between Sherman and Grant over the past two years conclusively led to the Union's final victory.

On 10 April, Sherman received a message from Grant that laid down the basis for the entire 1864 campaign. In it, Grant proposed to Sherman:

[T]o move [you] against Johnston's army, to break it up, and to get into the interior of the enemy's country as far as you can, inflicting all the damage you can against their war resources. I so not propose to lay down for you a plan of campaign, but simply to lay down the work it is desirable to have done, and leave you free to execute it in your own way.⁷⁵

In preparation for the upcoming campaign against Confederate General Joseph Johnston and his Army of the Tennessee, Sherman met with his army commanders, minus Steele, at Chattanooga. He described the meeting as:

[N]othing like a council of war, but [we] conversed freely and frankly on all matters of interest then in progress of impending...the purpose of our conference at the time was to ascertain our own resources, and to distribute to each part of the army its appropriate share of the work.. We discussed every possible contingency likely to arise, I simply instructed each army commander to make immediate preparations for a hard campaign.⁷⁶

⁷⁴Ibid., 379.

⁷⁵Ibid., 400-02, Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant to Major General William T. Sherman, 4 April 1864, OR Vol. 32, Part III, 246.

⁷⁶Ibid., 381.

Sherman's leadership qualities and the impression made on him during his open discussions with Grant was readily evident in this meeting with his commanders. Sherman knew these men from different times throughout his career; he roomed with Thomas as a cadet at West Point, he knew McPherson briefly in New York while serving as a bank manager and he met Schofield while serving in Missouri after his relief in Kentucky. He stated, "In Generals Thomas, McPherson, and Schofield, I had three generals of education and experience, admirably qualified for the work before us...each possessed special qualities of mind and of character which fitted them in the highest degree for the work then in contemplation."⁷⁷ As Sherman received mentoring from Halleck and Grant, he would now mentor his subordinates, especially McPherson.

During their discussion, the commanders identified supplies as the greatest concern of the approaching campaign. Local guerillas and confederate cavalry contested the Union use of the railroad along the one hundred and thirty-six miles from Nashville, their main supply depot, to Chattanooga.⁷⁸ For the purpose of this operation, scheduled to begin on or about 1 May, Sherman assumed the strength of his combined forces at one hundred thousand men, and the number of animals at thirty-five thousand.⁷⁹ Harnessing the transportation capacity of the north, Sherman estimated his railroad needs at one hundred locomotives and one thousand railway cars to sustain

⁷⁷Ibid., 387. Pages 387-99 depicts each army's rolls and the final tally of Sherman's forces attacking into Georgia at 98,797 men and 254 guns. Listed is the composition of each army: Army of the Cumberland, Infantry, 54,568; artillery, 2,377; cavalry, 3,828; total, 60,773. Guns, 130; Army of the Tennessee, Infantry, 22,437; artillery, 1,404; cavalry, 624; total, 24,465. Guns, 96; Army of the Ohio, Infantry, 11,183; artillery, 679; cavalry, 1,697; total, 13,559. Guns, 28. These figures do not include various cavalry units that joined his force prior to the siege of Atlanta. This information can also be found in OR, 32, part I, 62-63.

⁷⁸Ibid., 382.

⁷⁹Ibid., 383.

his forces beyond Chattanooga and into Georgia.⁸⁰ Through various civilian and military means and channels, Sherman received all the transportations assets he required.

Throughout the month of April, Sherman received reports through Thomas' spy network, revealing the composition and position of Johnston's forces in and around Dalton, Georgia. Johnston had between forty to fifty thousand men plus some local Georgia militia.⁸¹ Johnston assumed a defensive posture, which allowed Sherman to finish his preparations. In order to make his force more maneuverable and capable of overcoming an established defensive force, Sherman limited the number of wagons each subordinate command had available for supplies other than food, ammunition and clothing. This decision made his force more mobile and better suited to the restricted terrain between Chattanooga and Atlanta. To assist in the sustainment of his forces while traversing the countryside, Sherman obtained copies of documentation depicting the census data for the state of Georgia. As he reported to Grant, "Georgia has a million inhabitants. If they can live, we should not starve. If the enemy interrupts our communications, I will be absolved from all obligations to subsist on our resources, and we will feel perfectly justified in taking whatever and wherever we can find."⁸²

In order to coordinate his forces in time, space and purpose, Sherman examined the problems of terrain, supplies and the enemy confronting him. He understood and visualized the actions necessary for achieving his aim. Throughout the campaign, Sherman focused on outmaneuvering Johnston. He wrote Grant on 10 April, outlining the broad, general approach to his campaign. In his letter, Sherman concluded:

⁸⁰Ibid., 384.

⁸¹Ibid., 382.

⁸²Ibid., 403. Major General William T. Sherman to Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant, 10 April 1864, OR Vol. 32, Part III, 313.

Should Johnston fall behind the Chattahoochee [River], I will feign to the right but pass to the left and act against Atlanta or its eastern communications, according to developed facts. This is about as far ahead as I feel disposed to look, but I will ever bear in mind that Johnston is at all times to be kept so busy that he cannot in any event send any part of his command against you or Banks.⁸³

To achieve his goal of out maneuvering Johnston, Sherman arranged his army with Schofield on his left, Thomas in the center and McPherson on his right. This placed more than half his strength in the center while still maintaining enough combat power on his flanks to take advantage of opportunities or confront anything the Confederates might throw at them. Sherman utilized multiple parallel roads while centering himself along the Western and Atlantic Railroad, which traveled from Chattanooga to Atlanta. This allowed his forces to travel dispersed but within supporting range of each other while still receiving adequate supplies from a central locale.

The terrain leading to Dalton favored the defender. Johnston prepared a defense in depth, capitalizing on the terrain's canalizing affect in order to neutralize Sherman's numerical advantage. In order to gain a position of relative advantage, Sherman employed Thomas and Schofield to fix Johnston's forces while McPherson moved around Johnston's left flank and seized the Snake Creek Gap approximately eighteen miles, behind Johnston's line and south of Dalton.⁸⁴ This turning movement had the potential of becoming an envelopment, entrapping Johnston's army, if McPherson seized the town of Resaca.

Unfortunately, McPherson moved the wagon trains behind his formation rather than integrated with each unit, in order to move his infantry faster, created a logistical problem for McPherson's lead elements. The infantry could not sustain their momentum against Johnston's

⁸³Ibid. Major General William T. Sherman to Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant, 10 April 1864, OR Vol. 32, Part III, 314.

⁸⁴Marszalek, *Sherman*, 264.

force holding Resaca.⁸⁵ Another factor hindering McPherson's attempt to secure Resaca was the road network from Dalton to Resaca. Multiple roads, in addition to the railroad leading from Dalton to Resaca, created an untenable position to defend through the evening of 8 May; therefore, McPherson withdrew and fortified a position near the Snake Creek Gap where he awaited supplies and reinforcements. A lack of provisions and fear of an exposed flank prevented McPherson from successfully seizing Resaca and trapping Johnston's force.⁸⁶ To instill an aggressive spirit in McPherson concerning seizing the initiative and taking prudent risks in the face of opportunities, Sherman told him, "Well, Mac, you have just missed the great opportunity of your life."⁸⁷ McPherson did not repeat this mistake.

Johnston maintained his position in Dalton until the evening of 11 May, when he withdrew to Resaca under the cover of darkness. McPherson's lost opportunity haunted Sherman as his troops dug in to besiege Johnston's forces, but McPherson's position made holding Resaca for long untenable. Once again, Johnston conducted a night withdrawal. This time he moved toward Cassville near the Etowah River. As Sherman recalled in his *Memoirs*, "Of course, I was disappointed not to have crippled his [Johnston's] army more at that particular stage [Dalton and

⁸⁵Joseph E. Johnston, *Narrative of Military Operations during the Civil War*, De Capo Press Paperback edition with and introduction by Frank E. Vandiver (New York: De Capo Press, 1959), 308-318. Johnston's detailed description of operations near Dalton and Resaca reveal his surprise and inability to prevent Sherman's repeated flanking maneuvers. Johnston believed Sherman would use his overwhelming numerical superiority to bludgeon his way through each Confederate position.

⁸⁶Report from Major General James McPherson to Major General William T. Sherman, 9 May 1864, OR Vol. 32, Part III, 16-17.

⁸⁷Marszalek, *Sherman*, 265. Marszalek does not cite a source for this quotation but a comparable statement was made by Sherman in his *Memoirs* on page 409-10. A second source using this quotation is found in Benson Bobrick, *Master of War: The Life of General George H. Thomas* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009), 232-33. Bobrick presents a passage from Willard Warner, a member of Sherman's staff, who was present at the exchange between Sherman and McPherson.

Resaca]; but, as it resulted, these rapid advances gave us the initiative, and the usual impulse of a conquering army.”⁸⁸

Having seized the initiative through an increased tempo, Sherman looked to retain the initiative by conducting multiple simultaneous maneuvers. Intending to repeat Grant’s success at Vicksburg concerning his onslaught of operations against Pemberton, Sherman wanted to confuse, distract, disrupt and deceive Johnston. Sherman utilized Thomas’ Army of the Cumberland repeatedly as his anvil, while Schofield and McPherson hammered away at Johnston’s screening forces and flanks. During these maneuvers, Sherman sent cavalry forces west to secure the town of Rome, Georgia, which he then used as an advanced supply depot, and he sent additional cavalry forces south to threaten the railroad hub in the town of Kingston. Johnston intended to fight at the town of Cassville, a few miles east of Kingston, on 18 May, but Sherman’s maneuvers, specifically Schofield’s army, flanked his position and once again forced him to retreat.⁸⁹ This time Johnston used the Etowah River as a barrier, allowing him to create some separation between his forces and Sherman’s. Sherman used Johnston’s break in contact as an operational pause in order to repair damaged rail line, bring up supplies, and rest and refit his men from 20-23 May 1864.⁹⁰ By continuing to pursue Johnston’s force, Sherman retained the initiative, gained a position of relative advantage and maintained Johnston in a position of disadvantage.

As Sherman’s forces moved farther south, he encountered familiar terrain. As a lieutenant, he traveled these parts extensively and recalled the difficult terrain, especially, “about

⁸⁸Sherman, *Memoirs*, 412.

⁸⁹Johnston, *Narratives*, 320-325.

⁹⁰Sherman, *Memoirs*, 413-8.

Kenesaw, Allatoona and the Etowah River.”⁹¹ Instead of forcing his way through more constricting terrain, Sherman decided to move his entire force west through Dallas, Georgia. He prepared for twenty days away from his supply lines, and traveled through the countryside in order to bypass Johnston’s prepared positions.⁹² Over the next fifteen days, Sherman maneuvered his forces continually in the face of strong Confederate opposition; finally forcing Johnston to retreat to Kenesaw Mountain, and allowing the Union forces to reestablish contact along the railroad near the town of Big Shanty on 10 June.

With supplies forthcoming, Sherman prepared to maneuver against Johnston’s entrenched position around Marietta, Georgia, guarded by Kenesaw Mountain. Following the movement across country, Sherman’s army faced east and its arrangement consisted of McPherson on the left or north, Thomas in the center and Schofield on the right or south. Continually extending his lines, Sherman searched for a way to bypass or flank Johnston’s position until he finally ran out of space. Thus on 27 June, Sherman attacked Johnston’s fortified lines. He employed Thomas’ and McPherson’s forces intending to create two breaches in the Confederate line, while Schofield feinted against Johnston’s left flank and threatened his rear. Neither Thomas nor McPherson succeeded in breaching the confederate defenses but Schofield’s demonstration gained more ground than expected and created an opportunity to turn the Confederate position.⁹³

Sherman determined to retain the initiative by withdrawing McPherson’s army and passing it behind Thomas and Schofield in order to move south of Marietta and exploit the opportunity presented by Schofield’s demonstration. In order to accomplish this, Sherman assumed risk by employing cavalry to screen his supply lines while once again breaking from his

⁹¹Ibid., 418.

⁹²Ibid., 418-25.

⁹³Ibid., 431-7.

supply depot and sustaining his force off the countryside and ten days of wagon-carried provisions. Johnston withdrew from Marietta on 3 July and occupied new defensive positions north of the Chattahoochee River astride the two roads leading to Atlanta.⁹⁴

Sherman continued to maneuver his forces as he searched for a crossing point along the Chattahoochee River. He used Thomas and McPherson to fix Johnston's force while Schofield moved east of Marietta to seize crossing points at Soap's Creek and Roswell, which he did on 9 July. This effectively forced Johnston to retreat to the prepared positions around Atlanta. By 17 July, Sherman's forces were fully across the Chattahoochee and positioned north and east of Atlanta. Deployed on the right, Thomas' army faced south and confronted the bulk of Johnston's force. Schofield positioned in the center faced southwest and McPherson on the far left faced west while destroying the Georgia Railroad between Atlanta and Augusta, and searching for ways to turn the confederate defenses by passing south of Atlanta.⁹⁵ As 18 July dawned Sherman faced a new adversary; General John Bell Hood replaced Johnston and opened a new phase of the battle for Atlanta.⁹⁶

In stark contrast to Johnston's defensive nature, Hood's aggressive style posed a threat to Sherman's forces as they converged on Atlanta. While maneuvering his armies across the Chattahoochee River, a sizable gap of ten miles developed between Thomas' and Schofield's forces.⁹⁷ On 20 July, Hood attempted to exploit this gap by isolating and defeating Thomas' force

⁹⁴Johnston., *Narrative*, 345-6.

⁹⁵Sherman, *Memoirs*, 444.

⁹⁶Johnston, *Narrative*, 348-350. Sherman, *Memoirs*, 444. Sherman learned of Johnston's removal from a spy inside Atlanta who brought out a local newspaper reporting the change in command.

⁹⁷Bobrick, *Master of War*, 252.

in detail before turning on Schofield.⁹⁸ This unexpected offensive maneuver failed as Thomas' force withstood Hood's uncoordinated attack and Schofield closed the gap, but this setback did not deter Hood nor did it change Sherman's attempt to besiege the city. Sherman continued to coordinate the movement of his forces in order to isolate Atlanta by systematically cutting all lines of communication to the city.⁹⁹

Two days later, on 22 July, Hood once again attempted to seize the initiative and destroy Sherman's army in detail. This time Hood believed he found an open flank to exploit.¹⁰⁰ Thinking that McPherson's southern flank invited attack by being unsecure, Hood removed one corps under Lieutenant General William J. Hardee and all his cavalry under Major General Joseph Wheeler in order to attack and destroy the Union Army of the Tennessee. During this unsuccessful attack, Hood's men inflicted one of the most serious casualties of the campaign against Sherman's forces; they killed Major General McPherson while he attempted to return to his command after consulting with Sherman. His death devastated Sherman and the men of the Army of Tennessee.

Intending to maneuver around Atlanta's fortifications and cut the railroad south of the city, Sherman attacked on 28 July. The Army of Tennessee, now commanded by Major General Oliver Otis (O. O.) Howard, marched behind both Schofield's and Thomas' armies and attacked west of Atlanta attempting to cut the Macon & Western Railroad, the only road by which

⁹⁸John Bell Hood, *Advance and Retreat*, De Capo Press edition with an introduction by Richard M. McMurry (New York: De Capo Press, 1993), 165-72.

⁹⁹Major General William T. Sherman to Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant, 25 July 1864, OR, Vol. 38, Part V, 247. In this brief correspondence, Sherman reports the cutting of two of the three supply lines into the Atlanta, with his expectations of shortly cutting the final line.

¹⁰⁰Hood, *Advance and Retreat*, 173-82.

confederate forces were being resupplied and reinforced.¹⁰¹ Simultaneously, Sherman intended for cavalry attacks around both the east and west of Atlanta to distract Hood's cavalry and destroy the Macon Railroad near the town of Jonesboro, approximately twenty-five miles south of the city. Following the destruction of the rail line near Jonesboro, Sherman authorized a detachment of cavalry to attempt a rescue at Andersonville Prison, then holding between twenty-three and thirty-four thousand Union prisoners.¹⁰²

None of the attacks on 28 July fully accomplished their missions. Howard's army maneuvered west of Atlanta but a Confederate counter-attack stymied him at Ezra Church. Although Howard did not reach the Macon Railroad, he extended the Union line and forced the Confederates to respond to his movements. As for the cavalry, one cavalry force temporarily disrupted movement along the Macon Railroad south of Jonesboro, but the second force was defeated and captured. Even without fully achieving his aims, Sherman maintained the initiative and compelled Hood to react to his maneuvers.

Over the next three weeks, Sherman continued to improve his siege lines around the west, north and east of Atlanta while developing a plan to end the siege without directly attacking Hood's forces. On 10 August, he wrote Grant the broad outlines of his plan:

In order to possess and destroy effectually his communications I may have to leave a corps at the railroad bridge, well entrenched, and cut loose with the balance and make a desolating circle around Atlanta. I do not propose to assault the works, which are too strong, or to proceed by regular approaches.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹Major General William T. Sherman to Major General John A Logan, temporary commander of the Army of Tennessee, 24 July 1864, OR, Vol. 38, Part V, 242-3. By the time of the attack on 28 July, Howard had assumed command.

¹⁰²Hood, *Advance and Retreat*, 196. Sherman, *Memoirs*, 458. The number of prisoners at Andersonville was listed by Sherman as 23,000 and by Hood as 34,000.

¹⁰³Major General William T. Sherman to Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant, 10 August 1864, OR, Vol. 38, Part V, 447.

Prior to enacting his plan against Hood's supply line, Hood sent his cavalry, under Wheeler, on a raid along Sherman's supply lines near Chattanooga, hoping to break the siege.¹⁰⁴ Instead, Hood blinded himself, as all his reconnaissance assets were no longer available to him and recognizing this, Sherman took action.¹⁰⁵ During the night of 25 August, Sherman utilized one corps as a screening force along the entrenchments north of Atlanta while he withdrew the remainder of his forces and moved them all south of the city. He intended to destroy the final supply line into Atlanta and force Hood to attack on unfavorable terms, surrender or abandon the city.¹⁰⁶

Sherman's attack split Hood's force as Hood reinforced the town of Jonesboro with Hardee's corps. Schofield's army stationed at Rough and Ready faced north to block any more confederates from supporting Hardee, while Howard and Thomas destroyed the Macon Railroad and attempted to isolate and defeat Hardee around Jonesboro. With the final supply line to Atlanta cut, Hood withdrew from the city on the night of 2 September 1864 and retreated southeast to Lovejoy's Station. Sherman succeeded in taking Atlanta but still faced Hood's intact Army of the Tennessee.

The four months entailing the Atlanta campaign demonstrated Sherman's application of operational art. He continually out maneuvered his opponents; repeatedly gaining positions of relative advantage and once he seized the initiative he never relinquished it; forcing Johnston and Hood to constantly react to his endeavors. Sherman's ability to understand the problem; visualize a solution; describe the solution to his subordinates; direct appropriate actions; lead his forces at

¹⁰⁴Hood, *Advance and Retreat*, 198.

¹⁰⁵Sherman, *Memoirs*, 472.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*

all time and continually assess the situation created an environment in which he accepted prudent risks in order to seize upon his opponent's relative disadvantage

THE GEORGIA CAMPAIGN

Following the occupation of Atlanta on 1 September, Sherman faced multiple problems. His supply line stretched back through Chattanooga to Louisville, Hood's Army of the Tennessee escaped to western Georgia, Confederate cavalry led by Forrest and Wheeler raided Union outposts and supply lines in middle and eastern Tennessee, the civilian populace of Atlanta required attention and Grant desired to know what Sherman proposed to do next. While solving these issues, Sherman displayed flexibility, adaptability and a capacity for integrating operations across the depth of his area of operations.

Immediately after occupying Atlanta, Sherman planned to turn the town into a military depot. This included the expulsion of the entire civilian population to prevent them from interfering with military operations. He recalled the impact of occupation duty from previous experiences at Memphis and Vicksburg on Union forces and vowed to prevent them from happening to his forces. Sherman wrote to Halleck on 4 September, "If the people raise a howl against my barbarity and cruelty, I will answer that war is war, and not popularity-seeking. If they want peace, they and their relatives must stop the war."¹⁰⁷ Sherman believed, "[T]he people of the South would read in this measure [exile] two important conclusions: one, that we [Union forces] were in earnest; and the other, if they were sincere in their common and popular clamor, 'to die in the last ditch,' that the opportunity would soon come."¹⁰⁸ Once again, Sherman's understanding of southern nature helped him to gain a psychological advantage over Hood and the Georgian populace, while creating the conditions for a greater and more devastating effect from future endeavors.

¹⁰⁷Sherman, *Memoirs*, 479. Major General William T. Sherman to Major General Henry W. Halleck, 4 September 1864, OR, Vol. 38, Part V, 794.

¹⁰⁸Sherman, *Memoirs*, 479.

In order to preserve his supply lines and base of operations in Tennessee, Sherman dispatched Thomas with part of the Army of the Cumberland to Chattanooga and Nashville on 28 September. Hood was still stationary in western Georgia and did not pose an immediate threat, allowing Sherman to divide his forces. Thomas organized incoming recruits, in addition to reinforcements from Missouri and Arkansas, and fortified key outposts, preventing Forrest and Wheeler from doing little more than tearing up rail lines, which Union forces quickly repaired. After splitting his forces, Sherman retained approximately 60,000 men distributed among five corps.¹⁰⁹ Believing he solved his rear area security issue, Sherman turned his focus on Hood's forces.

While Sherman dealt with security issues, Hood attempted to isolate Union forces around Atlanta by moving northeast and cutting the Western and Atlantic Rail Road near Allatoona. Sherman's forces won the day at Allatoona and chased Hood as he traveled further north toward Rome, then Resaca, reaching as far north as Dalton on 12 October. This was the last point at which Sherman and Hood confronted each other. Following a failed attempt to force the surrender of the Dalton garrison, Hood retreated south and then west toward Alabama. He reached Tuscumbia on 31 October lacking supplies and awaiting reinforcement from Forrest's cavalry. While Hood moved into Alabama, Sherman realigned his forces, assigning Schofield's Army of the Ohio to serve under Thomas, while maintaining enough combat power at his disposal to conduct a raid into the interior of Georgia. As Anne Bailey pointed out in her book, *The Chessboard of War*:

Both Sherman and Hood longed to make a decisive strike that would help end the war, and both thought that what they're were doing in the West was important. Still, both men had the same long-range goal, to reinforce one of the two opposing armies in Virginia...Neither could know that their actions, not those of Lee and Grant, would hasten the war's end.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 513.

¹¹⁰Anne Bailey, *The Chessboard of War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000),

Hood's flight created an opportunity for Sherman, which he believed worth the risk of splitting his forces and cutting himself free from his supply and communication lines. Sherman wrote Grant on 11 October:

We cannot remain on the defensive. With twenty-five thousand infantry and the bold cavalry he has, Hood can constantly break my road. I would definitely prefer to make a wreck of the road and of the country from Chattanooga to Atlanta, including the later city; send back all of my wounded and unserviceable men, and with my effective army move through Georgia, smashing things to the sea.¹¹¹

Even before this exchange with Grant on 11 October, Sherman laid the foundation for his raid in a message to Grant on 20 September responding to Grant's request for information concerning future operations. Sherman wrote, "[T]he more I study the game, the more I am convinced that it would be wrong for us to penetrate farther into Georgia without an objective beyond."¹¹² He considered ongoing Union operations throughout the country and envisioned an envelopment of Lee's forces by Grant from the north and his own forces from the south, focused on Wilmington, North Carolina. Sherman discussed the possibilities of seizing Milledgeville, the Georgia capital, Macon, Augusta, and Savannah enroute to linking up with the Union Navy along the Savannah River. He believed, "The possession of the Savannah River is more than fatal to the possibility of Southern independence. They may stand the fall of Richmond, but not of all Georgia."¹¹³ After many discussions, Grant approved Sherman's operation on 2 November when he wrote, "I do not see that you can withdraw from where you are to follow Hood, without giving

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¹¹¹Sherman, *Memoirs*, 520-1. Major General William T. Sherman to Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant, 11 October 1864, OR, Vol. 39, Part II, 202.

¹¹²Sherman, *Memoirs*, 483. Major General William T. Sherman to Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant, 20 September 1864, OR, Vol. 39, Part II, 412.

¹¹³*Ibid.*

up all we have gained in territory. I say, then, go on as you propose.”¹¹⁴ While awaiting the results of the presidential election, Sherman’s men destroyed the railroad from Atlanta to Chattanooga and on 12 November severed the final telegraph line with the outside world. Cut free of all his supply and communication lines, Sherman advanced into Georgia’s interior.

The men of Sherman’s force believed they heading to Richmond to link up with Grant’s forces to destroy Lee, but Sherman intended to rip the soul out of the southern psyche by marching his force through the heart of Dixie. Joseph T. Glatthaar wrote in his book, *The March to the Sea and Beyond*, “Sherman’s objective was to demonstrate to the Southern people that the Confederate armies were no longer capable of protecting its citizens and that life outside the Union was much worse than life within the Union.”¹¹⁵ He designed his force of 62,000 men and sixty-five artillery pieces to move fast and forage off the land. They carried twenty days of rations and marched ample amount of beef on the hoof. As Anne Baily noted in her book, *War and Ruin*, “Sherman’s goal was to break the South’s will to fight, not to devastate the land and murder the people.”¹¹⁶ In order to mitigate the wanton destruction of private property, Sherman issued Special Field Orders, NO. 120, which directed:

The army will forage liberally on the country during the march...Soldiers must not enter the dwellings of the inhabitants, or commit any trespass...To corps commanders alone is intrusted the power to destroy mills, houses, cotton-gins, etc.; and for them this general principle is laid down: In districts and neighborhoods where the army is unmolested, no destruction of such property should be permitted; but should guerillas or bushwackers molest our march, or should inhabitants burn bridges, obstruct roads or otherwise manifest local hostility, then the army commanders should order and enforce a devastation more or less relentless, according to the measure of such hostility.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴Sherman, *Memoirs*, 532. Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant to Major General William T. Sherman, 2 November 1864, OR, Vol. 39, Part III, 594.

¹¹⁵Joseph T. Glatthaar, *The March to the Sea and Beyond: Sherman’s Troops in the Savannah and Carolinas Campaigns* (New York: New York University Press, 1985), 100.

¹¹⁶Anne Bailey, *War and Ruin*, (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2003), 31.

¹¹⁷Sherman, *Memoirs*, 541. Special Field Order No. 120, Headquarters, Military Division

Without a predetermined destination in mind, Sherman marched his four corps in two wings, always moving on divergent paths to deceive the enemy but concentrating on distant objectives. Commanded by Major General O.O. Howard, the right wing consisted of the XV and XVII Corps, the left wing commanded by Major General H.W. Slocum consisted of the XIV and XX Corps and Brigadier General Judson Kilpatrick commanded the two brigades of cavalry. The Georgian capital of Milledgeville was the first objective, approximately 100 miles southeast of Atlanta.¹¹⁸ On 15 November, Sherman's forces left Atlanta, the left wing feinted east to threaten Augusta as his right wing moved south to threaten Macon. With few Confederate forces remaining in the state, Sherman's men marched unimpeded with the XIV Corps walking into Milledgeville on 22 November. The Georgia capital fell without a single shot fired.¹¹⁹

Sherman continued to confuse his opponents as he turned east from Macon and Milledgeville and reoriented on Georgia's coast. His intermediate objective was the town of Millen, which was centrally located between Augusta and Savannah and sat at the intersection of four roads. Sherman arrived in Millen on 3 December and based on his assessment of the enemy, decided to move against Savannah. Sherman sent Kilpatrick's cavalry toward Augusta to maintain the deception that Augusta was the next objective, while his corps each traveled down a separate road toward Savannah. Confederate Lieutenant General William J. Hardee commanded the forces protecting Savannah and he positioned his only division, led by General Lafayette McLaws, in front on Sherman's juggernaut hoping to slow it down. Traveling on four roads from Millen to Savannah, Sherman outflanked McLaws' position forcing him back toward Savannah's

of the Mississippi, OR, Vol. 39, Part III, 713.

¹¹⁸Sherman, *Memoirs*, 546.

¹¹⁹James C. Bonner, "Sherman at Milledgeville in 1864," *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 22, No. 3 (August 1956), 275, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2954546> (accessed 8 June 2012).

defenses. By 10 December, all four corps occupied positions against Savannah's defenses and on 13 December, Fort McAllister fell to the XV Corps, thus allowing Sherman to communicate with the Union fleet blockading Savannah. In less than a month, Sherman crossed the state of Georgia, reestablished his supply and communication lines by sea and positioned his forces to seize Savannah while encountering only light resistance from Confederate forces.¹²⁰

Over the next week, Sherman's men prepared to siege and assault Savannah. General Hardee refused multiple requests for surrender and left Sherman with no other option than forcibly seizing the town. During this time, Hood attacked Thomas' forces in Nashville and was defeated on 15-16 December, thus justifying Sherman's prudent assumption of risk when he split his forces before the march. Even while his forces were around Savannah, Sherman looked to the future. Grant contemplated pulling Sherman's force out of Georgia to Virginia via a sea route to assist in the defeat of Lee. Sherman wrote Grant on 18 December:

With Savannah in our possession, at some future time if not now, we can punish South Carolina as she deserves, and as thousands of people in Georgia hoped we would do. I do sincerely believe that the whole United States, North and South, would rejoice to have this army turned loose on South Carolina, to devastate that State in the manner we have done in Georgia, and it would have a direct and immediate bearing on your campaign in Virginia.¹²¹

Grant acquiesced to Sherman's position as the commander on the ground and asked for his recommendation. Sherman responded with an outline for offensive operation against the infrastructure of South and North Carolina, with Charleston, Columbia, Raleigh or Wilmington as possible objectives along the way. On 21 December, Union forces discovered the defenses outside Savannah deserted. Hardee escaped with his forces during the night, leaving the city to Sherman and his men. The march to the sea was successfully completed.

¹²⁰Sherman, *Memoirs*, 556.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, 574-5. Major General William T. Sherman to Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant, 18 December 1864, OR, Vol. 44, 743.

THE CAROLINAS CAMPAIGN

With Savannah secured, Sherman transformed the city into a supply base. Poor weather and restricted terrain delayed some of his his movement into South Carolina until 1 February 1865, but this delay did give him time to gather supplies, receive reinforcements and coordinate efforts with Grant and Thomas. Grant used Meade's forces to siege Lee at Petersburg, Virginia, while Thomas pursued the remnants of Hood's Army of the Tennessee out of Tennessee through Alabama and into Mississippi. Additionally, Union forces led by General Canby attacked north from Mobile, Alabama into the interior of that state while forces under General Alfred Terry seized Fort Fisher outside Wilmington, North Carolina, cutting off the Confederacy's last major port. To knockout the South, the Union needed to deliver a final, devastating blow and Sherman answered the call.

Shortly after Savannah fell, Sherman sent a message to both Grant and Halleck outlining his next campaign. On 24 December, he wrote:

I feel no doubt whatever as to our future plans; I have thought them over so long and well that they appear as clear as daylight. I left Augusta untouched on purpose, because now the enemy will be in doubt as to my objective point...whether it be Augusta or Charleston, and will naturally divide his forces. I will then move on Branchville or Columbia, on any curved line that give me the best supplies...then ignoring Charleston and Augusta both, occupy Columbia and Camden...then I would favor Wilmington...But on the hypothesis of taking Wilmington, I would then favor a movement direct on Raleigh. The game is then up with Lee, unless he comes out of Richmond, avoids you, and fights me, in which event I should reckon on your [Grant] being on his heels.¹²²

Sherman began operations in earnest as he cut his supply and communication lines and his forces, still divided in two wings, moved into South Carolina. Although the Slocum's Left Wing were delayed as they faced obstacles due to weather and terrain, Howard's Right Wing

¹²²Major General William T. Sherman to Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant, 24 December 1864, OR, Vol. 44, 797-8. Also Major General William T. Sherman to Major General Henry W. Halleck, 24 December 1864, OR Vol. 44, 798-800.

embarked on ships and landed at Beaufort, South Carolina on 15 January.¹²³ This allowed Sherman to preposition supplies near Pocotaligo Creek and prepare a demonstration against Charleston, with the aid of Admiral D. A. Dahlgren, commander of the Union Naval forces. Once the weather subsided enough for Slocum's men to begin their movement on 1 February, Sherman launched his men into the interior of South Carolina, utilizing Kilpatrick's cavalry to threaten Augusta and screen his movements toward Columbia. This effectively put Sherman's forces between the Confederates defending Augusta and Charleston, neither of which was strong enough to attack him individually and lacking the coordination to attack together.

In front of Sherman, Wheeler's cavalry and Hardee's infantry burnt bridges and defended crossing points in an attempt to delay the Union juggernaut. Unable to discern Sherman's objective, the Confederates defended everywhere, allowing Sherman to maintain the initiative and decide when to move against Columbia. This he did on 14 February as he coordinated the Left and Right Wing to attack Columbia simultaneously from the west and north. Arriving before the city on 16 February, Union forces entered Columbia in the 17th as Confederate cavalry forces under General Wade Hampton, "ordered that all cotton, public and private, should be moved into the street and fired, to prevent our [Union] forces making use of it."¹²⁴ These fires spread through Columbia and Sherman and the men of the XV Corps spent the night of 17 February firefighting, evacuating and providing for the now displaced inhabitants. This once again shows that Sherman did not favor murder and wanton destruction; otherwise, he could have left the town burn uncontrollably and the people to fend for themselves. While attempting to save private property,

¹²³Slocum's Left Wing, comprising the XIV and XX Corps was officially designated the Army of Georgia in order to detach them from Thomas' Army of the Cumberland, who tried to recall them to Nashville. Howard's Right Wing, comprised the XV and XVII Corps and retained its title as the Army of Tennessee.

¹²⁴Major General William T. Sherman to Major General Henry W. Halleck, 4 April 1865, OR, Vol. 47, Part I, 21.

Sherman focused on the military industrial capacity of Columbia, as the XV Corps spent 18 and 19 February destroying arsenals, railroad depots, machine shops and foundries.¹²⁵

With Columbia in Union hands, Sherman moved his forces in the direction of Charlotte, North Carolina to draw his enemy away from his real objective, the state capital of Raleigh. Simultaneously, Schofield and his XXIII Corps arrived at Fort Fisher and in conjunction with Terry's forces, seized Wilmington on 22 February. This allowed Union forces to start stockpiling supplies in Wilmington as Sherman's forces moved away from Charlotte and moved toward Fayetteville, North Carolina.

Sherman's movements thus far isolated Augusta and Charleston, which surrendered on 18 February, after the last remnants of Hardee's men evacuated the city. Furthermore, his deceptive lines of march prevented the Confederates from consolidating and defending a single objective. Sent from Mississippi, elements of Hood's army found themselves stationed in Charlotte, where a general consolidation of Confederate forces was intended but Sherman's forces prevented this by maintaining a center position among the Confederate elements.

On 6 March, Sherman discovered General Joseph Johnson resumed command of all Confederate forces in South and North Carolina by reading a newspaper left behind in Hardee's recently evacuated headquarters in Cheraw, South Carolina.¹²⁶ Undaunted by Johnston's return, Sherman marched his entire army toward Fayetteville, entering the town unmolested on 12 March. At this time, Sherman reopened his supply and communication lines with the outside world, ordering Schofield and Terry to move their forces and link up with him at Goldsboro, North Carolina for a concerted movement against Raleigh. After a brief engagement with Johnston's forces near the town of Bentonville, Sherman's forces successfully linked-up with

¹²⁵Sherman, *Memoirs*, 642-3.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 648.

Schofield and Terry on 22 March in Goldsboro. After resupplying and reorganizing his army, Sherman prepared to resume offensive operations on 10 April. He began moving his forces toward Raleigh when he received word from Grant on 12 April that Lee surrendered at Appomattox Court House on 9 April. On 13 April, Sherman's forces entered Raleigh and on 14 April, Sherman and Johnston entered into surrender negotiations ending with the formal surrender of Confederate forces on 26 April.¹²⁷

The Grand March from Chattanooga to Raleigh successfully completed Grant's original order to Sherman at the start of the Atlanta campaign. Encompassing five states, three campaigns and almost an entire year, Sherman brilliantly displayed his operational art. Masterfully intertwining demonstrations and movements through previously thought impassible terrain, Sherman continuously confused his opponents and struck where and when he wanted.

¹²⁷Ibid., 717-8.

CONCLUSION

From humble obscurity, Major General William T. Sherman emerged and developed into a competent operational artist. His experiences before and during the first year of Civil War displayed the resilience and innate leadership attributes required for future success. His tutelage under Halleck and Grant garnered the additional insight and experience necessary for completing his transformation from a tactician to an operational artist. Once in command of the Military Division of the Mississippi, Sherman applied all his knowledge and understanding of the operational environment and developed operations capable of tying strategic goals, operational objectives and tactical tasks together in time space and purpose.

Looking through the lens of current doctrine, specifically ULO and Mission Command, Sherman understood and visualized operational art as a series of sequential operations tying Grant's strategic objectives to his own theater's operational objectives and tactical tasks. The circumstances in which he flourished provided the opportunity to display his operational art. Sherman did not create the concept of hard war. He just comprehended and applied it with devastating results. Utilizing the flexibility and mobility of his army group, he synchronized multiple operations allowing him to seize and retain the initiative, while simultaneously placing the enemy at a relative disadvantage. This allowed Sherman to dictate the course of each campaign by eliminating his enemy's options and maneuvering them away from his true operational objectives. Through the skillful placement of his forces, Sherman deterred the enemy around him from attacking and prevented them from conducting a coordinated defense. This ultimately allowed him to continue unimpeded toward his final goal and ensure the Union won the war.

The relevance of Sherman's evolution resonates in today's army. The idea that an officer can develop from a tactician to an operational artist through self and institutional education,

senior mentorship and relevant combat and training experience exhibited a perfect example for the existence of the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS).

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